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# TERROR

## Tracing The International Network

**By Claire Sterling**

**F**our well-groomed men bearing sawed-off shotguns approach a car on a busy street in Milan; bullets rip through the body of the passenger, chief of one of the city's largest hospitals. The Red Brigades, the nation's most-feared terrorist group, claims responsibility. In Northern Ireland, a band of armed men uses explosives to blast its way into the castle of Sir Norman Stronge, an 86-year-old Protestant leader and longtime speaker of Northern Ireland's Parliament; the bodies of Sir Norman and his son, James, 48 years old, are found later, bullets through their heads, and guerrillas of the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) say it was their work.

Such incidents — these two within the last few weeks — are the stuff of everyday headlines. But last month, at his first news conference as Secretary of State, Alexander M. Haig Jr. made them the focus of diplomatic confrontation. He warned that international terrorism had become "rampant," and he charged the Soviet Union with con-

sciously seeking to "foster, support and expand" terrorist activities around the world. Specifically, he accused Moscow of "training, funding and equipping" those who kill for political profit.

The reaction to Secretary Haig's charges was in many ways predictable. The Soviet Union called such talk "a gross and malicious deception" and insisted that the "control center of international terrorism" was, in fact, the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in Langley, Va. Journalists who interviewed Government intelligence experts — including some C.I.A. aides — quoted officials to the effect that there was no hard evidence to support Mr. Haig's accusations. And many Americans shook their heads despairingly at what sounded to them like nothing more than an old cold warrior's refrain, a broadside political attack against a safe and familiar target.

Until a few years ago, I might have been among those head-shakers. Generations of Americans, raised on Depression fare, find it hard to shake off a belief in the aspirations of the political left. But I have spent the last two and a half years researching leftist terrorist groups, talking to government officials and police in 10 countries from Sweden to

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